

# the bullet

Mary Washington College

P.O. Box 1115, Fredericksburg, Virginia

Monday, April 29, 1974

**"Every profession should produce its own leaders."**

## The Simpson Years at MWC

by Terry Talbott

In a little more than two months, Dr. Grellet C. Simpson will officially bring to an end his career as educator and administrator as President of Mary Washington College. Amidst the usual duties of the office prior to graduation, he must arrange for the orientation of his successor, move out of Brompton and into Belmont and find time for the many interviews and celebrations in his honor that are filling his days.

One honor that especially delights Simpson is the portrait by Eric Isenburger which was presented at Alumni Homecoming. "It's not the conventional portrait," he said. "The picture is modern, but not avant-garde. In fact, it looks like me and Barry Goldwater," he chuckled. "Concerning my personal political affiliations, though," Simpson added, "it's not exactly to my liking."

Simpson's career is proof of his belief that every profession should produce its own leaders. As he explained, he grew into the presidency instead of actually being trained for it. "I feel I've never grown out of being a teacher in my reactions and relationships with students," he said. "My relationship with the faculty remains one as a dean. I've never outgrown these things in 18 years, and it's made it right much fun," he confessed.



At the base of such relationships is his fundamental belief in mutual respect for his associates. He admitted, "There have been times I've overused the dean and teacher role, because it can be dogmatic or dictatorial, but behind it all is mutual respect."

This understanding has been the basis of his career in administration. He said, "There is nothing in administration per se that attracts me. You have to have a goal, because it is not an end in itself." Leaning

on his desk, Simpson added, "I never would have lasted if I hadn't seen this position was based on something."

The retirement period he considers a special time, saying, "You look back and wonder how you've used your life — not sentimentally — but to ask yourself if you've done the best you could. There's a whole psychological involvement with the sense of reality that I can't do things I used to," Simpson said.

He regrets that he had to sacrifice the personal satisfaction he was able to feel as a teacher. "You have to pay the price of not having the close classroom relationships," he said.

But he admits he is pleased with some aspects of his life. "I'm glad I came to Mary Washington College when I did," he said. "Now I'm appalled that I felt at 45 that I could do it! There's a certain arrogance there," he chuckled.

One of the few conscious decisions he remembers from his early career that he never regretted was the choice of a small college instead of a larger university. "When I graduated from the University," he said, "I asked myself where I really wanted to go. I made a deliberate choice for the small college, and I wouldn't change that decision today if I had it to make again."

Dr. Simpson has no plans to compile his memoirs for publication, and he even refused when Dr. Edward Alvey wanted to publish his speeches. "There is so much that is written and thought on such a job that would really be considered occasional literature," he said. "So much of it is just for the moment, it would be beating a dead horse to release it afterward." Former MWC Dean Whidden published a compiled version of Simpson's speeches earlier this year in MWC TODAY that expresses his philosophies of education, though.

From his years of experience, Simpson has developed a sense of the academic community both at Mary Washington College and the national student populous at large that reflects his personal perspectives on many issues. Looking back to the student strikes of the '60s, he admits they were times he "wouldn't want to go through again."

"I didn't like the methods the students used," he said, "but their basic concerns were essential. Someone needed to rock the academic world — and still does in some respects." He found their ways of questioning the motives and personal integrity of their adversaries offensive. "I don't operate that way," he said.

At Mary Washington specifically, Simpson feels that the College needs to take a stand on the curriculum. "I think it's fine that students are able to plan their courses of study," he said, "but to get our degree you must be qualified in various fields." He anticipates a shift back toward the traditional liberal arts foundation. "I think it'll come back," Simpson said. "I'm not terribly alarmed."

Recalling MWC's separation from the University of Virginia, Simpson viewed the benefits of the action largely one of self-identity. He also remarked that few MWC graduates ever held seats on the University Board of Visitors, but now eight of the 12 seats on the MWC Board are held by graduates of the College. "And those women on the Board are plenty keen," he admitted.



Dr. Simpson reflects on his administrative career from behind the desk of his office in George Washington

Being surrounded by women for so many years, it is not surprising that he recognizes a basis of truth in women's liberation. "This has been a man's world," Simpson said, "but that doesn't mean women don't have a place in it. Any man who thinks he can run the world without paying attention to women is doomed," he said.

Simpson realizes that if he were staying on at MWC it would be necessary to address himself closely to the coeducation of the College. "Some people feel I haven't pushed it," he said. "But I also haven't not pushed it." He believes in a gradual increase of male

enrollment instead of lowering standards to attract males, or sacrificing the academic atmosphere for a more social one.

"The environment we have now is healthy," he said. "I don't sense any inhibition among the students." There have been no real advantages or disadvantages, and he still emphasizes the essential question in the educational process.

"I've tried to keep coeducation from being an issue," Simpson explained. "I'm not convinced it's the issue from the '60s we tried to make it." His greater interest is in the assimilation of minority groups into the academic community, and for their ease in social situations as well.

After he leaves office, Simpson hopes to travel with his wife, but for the present their plans are "more talking than doing." They anticipate returning to favorite countries including Italy, where they lived. In the warmer weather, they hope to take a Russian liner from Canada to Leningrad. But for the present, Simpson mixes such plans with a career's fondest reminiscences of his years at Mary Washington College.

# Classmates, colleagues remember associations

by Diane Muro  
and Gwen Phillips

Do you know who was kept up all night by the alarms he set as a practical joke on his suitemate? Do you know who was a member of Phi Delta Theta at Randy-Mac? And, do you know who was an avid bridge player during his college days? The answer to these questions is our president, Dr. Simpson.

Gretel Simpson, president of MWC for 18 years, is retiring this summer. Throughout his years here, he has made many close associations and contributions to the college. Most students, however, have not had the opportunity to become acquainted with him. In order to offer such an opportunity several of his colleagues have revealed somewhat the real Dr. Simpson as they have known him over the course of their connection with the college.

"He is a great leader. He set and maintained standards," said Anne Moyse, Simpson's secretary for six years. This feeling of admiration was voiced by several others who have had close contact with him.

Dean Croushore, who has been with the college for 26 years, stated, "I've always found him to have a knack of balancing the various clientele evenly so that MWC has been allowed to go its own way pretty much according to the plan he laid down."

"I admire him tremendously for his foresight and his fairness. He had foresight that things were coming and was ready for the decisions to be made," said Miss Droste, Dean of Students.

The late 50's and early 60's were a time of great changes on many campuses throughout the nation. Here at MWC, three of the big issues were the abolishment of the strict dress code, the en loco parentis policy and the drinking regulations which prohibited consumption of alcoholic beverages within a 20 mile radius of Fredericksburg. When the students went to Dr. Simpson concerning these issues, he was willing to talk to them and make concessions provided they were held accountable for their actions.

"A slogan he used to use was 'freedom with responsibility,' said Dr. Alvey, author of History of Mary Washington, 1908-1972 and former dean of the college. "He believed that if you had freedom to act in a certain way, that you were responsible for your actions and you'd have sense enough to act with some judgment."

This philosophy of Dr. Simpson's is just one of many that is reflected in the values that are upheld at MWC. In utilizing these ideas, he has tried his best to make MWC one of the leading liberal arts colleges in the South. One of the major ways in which he did this was changing the school from a state teachers college.

"He came here and the college was part of the University of Virginia. It called itself a liberal arts college but it really never became an academic liberal arts college until he came, in my opinion," said Mr. Merchant, vice-president of the college.

In changing MWC to a liberal arts school, Dr. Simpson stressed high academic standards. According to Dr. Alvey, Simpson once stated at a faculty meeting that he was not worried about the faculty assigning too much work, he just did not want them to assign too little. Dr. Alvey feels that Simpson set an example by his scholarly addresses to the student body and in this way, helped to stimulate intellectual activity.

Along with these high academic standards, Dr. Simpson has initiated major changes in the physical appearance of the campus. During his administration, Combs, Goolrick, Russell, Jefferson, Bushnell and Marshall were added.

"The whole school reflects him; the grounds particularly reflect his good taste," said Mrs. Moyse. The well-kept look of the college and the grounds of Brompton exemplify his own interest in gardening as a

hobby. He selected the plants and designed the layout of the orchard and parts of the garden at Brompton. Other hobbies, according to Dean Croushore, include gourmet cooking, extensive travelling and listening to opera on Saturday afternoons. More interesting facts that are not well-known about Dr. Simpson concern his fondness for classical music, reading, fried chicken, entertaining, making pickles and canning foods.

On a more serious note, Dr. Simpson is highly regarded by his colleagues as a scholar, an administrator and a person.

"He's not one who will necessarily go along with you — sometimes he'll have very strong feelings. It's been my experience, though, that 99 times out of 100, he's been correct," said Mr. Merchant. "Dr. Simpson, to me, means Mary Washington College, a liberal arts college . . . He is a clear thinker and a problem solver, more in terms of a philosophical approach as opposed to one who bases decisions on data or numbers. His personality exemplifies to me the educated man. He is a humanist; very sensitive to people's feelings . . . an excellent man to work for."

Beneath Dr. Simpson's picture in his college yearbook is a short, but appropriate poem.

Fame is what you have taken,  
Character is what you give,  
When to this truth you waken,  
Then you begin to live.

## Naming of first Simpson scholar highlights Homecoming festivities

by Tracy Burke

Heidi Klussman, a sophomore from Peabody, Mass., was named the first Simpson Scholar at Homecoming festivities Saturday. As the recipient of the Gretel C. Simpson International Scholarship, she is to study in Munich, Germany for a year with about half of her expenses paid for by the Alumni Association.

Seven students applied for the award, and according to Diana Koski of the Alumni Association, the stiff application is designed for only the most determined and eligible students. The award is given on basis of merit, not on financial need, said Koski. James Groushore, Sidney Mitchell, Carmen Rivera, Bambi Willis (Class of '73), Karen Toney (Class of '52) and Koski were on a committee that interviewed each applicant "to see how serious she was about her program and to find out more about her," said Koski.

Klussman is leaving for Goethe Institute in Munich in August to undergo intensive German grammar and language training before she enters the University of Munich where all her classes will be taught in German. She hopes to live in protestant housing in Munich while going to school.

Before coming to MWC, Klussman said she had four years of high school German. She has taken several German literature courses at MWC and said, "I'm pleased with the department." She added, "My parents are both German and they speak German at home." The university's program is offered through Wayne State University and, according to Klussman, about 50 students from the United States have applied for admission.

Junior year abroad plans have been forming for Klussman for awhile. "I've had it in mind for a long time," she said, "and I've been working for it."

After she gets her Bachelor's degree in German, Klussman plans to teach and go to graduate school. "Then maybe I can teach on a college level," she said. She wants to teach German literature or art history, which is her minor.

The international scholarship is one of two ways the alumni are honoring Simpson, according to Koski. During Homecoming they also gave the college a portrait painting of Simpson.

Eric Isenburger, a nationally known artist who has been in residence twice at MWC, was at Homecoming for the presentation. The painting was moved to Brompton, the president of the college's home, until the college decides where to hang it.

Simpson went to New York for two weeks of sittings for Isenburger during Christmas break. The painting is framed in gold leaf.



Brompton, is about to bid farewell to one of its longtime inhabitants.

### the BULLET

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# Simpson's life centers on educational process

by Susan Belter

Grellet Collins Simpson was born in Norfolk, Virginia in 1909. He attended Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Virginia and received his Bachelor of Arts degree from there in 1930. During his undergraduate days he belonged to Phi Delta Theta social fraternity and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and Omicron Delta Kappa.

After his graduation from college Simpson taught at Randolph-Macon Academy as Instructor in English until 1931. In that year he was appointed as instructor in English at his alma mater Randolph-Macon College. In 1936 he received his Master of Arts degree from the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. At Randolph-Macon College he was promoted to Assistant Professor of English in 1936 and two years later to Associate Professor. Simpson married Dorothy Cottrell of Richmond, Virginia, in 1939.

Simpson attained the rank of full professor in 1943. In that same year he took a leave of absence from the college to serve in the American Red Cross during World War Two. He was a Field Supervisor for the Red Cross in South Italy for Service to Allied Personnel Families for three years.

He returned to the United States in 1946 and resumed his position as Professor of English at Randolph-Macon College. Simpson was awarded his Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Virginia in 1949. He became Dean of the Faculty at Randolph-Macon College in 1952.

Simpson left Randolph-Macon College in 1955 to assume the position of Chancellor and Professor of English at Mary Washington College, which was then part of the University of Virginia. He succeeded the late Malcolm L. Combs, who was president of the college from 1929 until 1955. As the fourth head of MWC Simpson has seen the college undergo many changes including the admission of male residential students and more blacks and more liberal social regulations as well as the separation of the college from the University of Virginia.

Simpson has belonged to numerous educational associations. He is a past president of the Association of Virginia Colleges and the Southern Association of Colleges for Women. He is also a past chairman of the Commission of Arts of the Association of American Colleges and of the Board of Directors of the University Center in Virginia as well as of the Council of Presidents of State Institutions of Higher Learning.

He is a past chairman of the Consortium of American College's United States-India Women's College Exchange Program. When the program was

being planned in 1963 Simpson and two other presidents of Virginia colleges spent six weeks in India planning the program. The program involved a faculty exchange between women's colleges in India and the United States. The program was begun in the fall of 1964, and six women's colleges in India and thirteen in the United States participated.

Among the honors and distinctions Simpson has received include two honorary degrees. One is an LL.D. degree from his alma mater Randolph-Macon College in 1958, and the other is an Litt.D. degree from Flagler College, which was given to him in 1972. Simpson is listed on Who's Who in America and Who's

Who in American Education.

In October 1973 Simpson officially announced that he intended to retire at the end of June in 1974 when he would have reached his sixty-fifth birthday. The Board of Visitors of the college selected Prince B. Woodard, the chancellor of the Board of Regents of West Virginia University system as his successor. At his retirement Simpson and Mrs. Simpson will leave their home at Brompton, the official residence of the president of the college, and move to Belmont, the home of the artist Gari Melchers now administered by the college and which the Simpsons are leasing.



Dr. and Mrs. Simpson pause for a photograph while strolling in their gardens at Brompton. They have hosted numerous receptions and events at Brompton over the years at MWC.



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